
ABROAD

PEKING

Frustration in China

Despite the apparent cordiality surrounding the recent visit of Jaime Cardinal Sin of Manila to the Chinese authorities, the Vatican has made no substantial progress in improving its relations with the People's Republic. Such is the view of diplomatic observers in the Chinese capital. In his second visit here in three years, Cardinal Sin was received by Communist Party chief Zhao Ziyang and said afterward that the Vatican's recognition of Taiwan would "pose no problem" for the normalizing of relations between the Vatican and Peking. But the cardinal was immediately contradicted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which said the Pope would indeed have to break off his ties to Taiwan if he wished to improve his position with the PRC. A more important obstacle concerns what Peking sees as the Vatican's effort to revive that part of the Chinese church which does not adhere to the "patriotic" (Peking-run) church. Religious agitation in general worries the Communist Chinese authorities, who have been busy suppressing yet another rebellion by the followers of the Dalai Lama in Tibet, and are seriously concerned about the effect of Islamic fundamentalism on their 55 million Muslim subjects.

MOSCOW

... and in the USSR

Pope John Paul II will not be invited to the millennial celebrations of the establishment of Christianity in Russia next year, according to the government-controlled Orthodox Patriarchate. The celebrations will be concentrated in Kiev in the Ukraine, the place where Christian missionaries from Constantinople found their first success. This news was revealed at a press conference and elaborated in a lengthy interview given to the Italian Communist newspaper, *Unità*, by Archbishop Pimen, the Patriarch of Moscow. The official reason is the support the Vatican gives to the Uniate Church of the Ukraine, whose members are Orthodox but recognize the primacy of Rome in the conduct of their affairs. The Pope had clearly hoped to be able to play some part in the forthcoming anniversary celebrations and possibly establish a link with the Orthodox communion, the biggest Christian grouping after the Roman church itself.

BRUSSELS

One Europe?

The Iron Curtain is crumbling, at least as far as trade between Eastern and Western Europe is concerned. For some years there has been talk of mutual recognition between the European Economic Community, based here, and a similar grouping of the satellite states, called Comecon, which was organized as a propaganda counterweight to the EEC. Such a step was foreshadowed by a recent meeting between Janos Kadar, the Hungarian Party boss, and Jacques Delors, president of the EEC. Hungary is soon to sign a commercial accord with the Community—an arrangement the Soviet Union approved in 1985, well before Mikhail Gorbachev had formulated his policy of "openness." Commercial dealings between East and West have

declined noticeably, which gives all the more impetus, it is argued here, to a general trade settlement. Various obstacles remain, however, the major one being the status of West Berlin. Comecon officially maintains that West Berlin cannot be included in the deal because that would infringe the quadripartite statute that still governs that city. But the quadripartite statute has been ignored so often in individual commercial dealings that this looks like a question of the gnat-and-camel sort. The Soviet Union itself is not interested in reaching a general agreement with the EEC, but in securing advanced Western technology, which it believes it can best acquire through individual dealing at the bipartite level.

FLORENCE

Dante's Dust

Two envelopes containing portions of Dante's remains and a shroud-like cloth bearing the imprint of his skull are supposedly stored somewhere in the Florentine National Library. They had been removed from Dante's official tomb in Ravenna, where he went after he was banished by the Florentine government in 1302 and where he died in 1321. Now, in an outburst of Florentine chauvinism, the press here, led by the local Communist daily, has demanded that the missing remains be found and buried properly in Dante's native city. The library maintains that the two envelopes in question, last seen in 1935, do not in fact contain Dante's dust, but chips and shavings collected in the 1890s from the poet's sarcophagus near the church of San Francesco in Ravenna.

STOCKHOLM

The New Lepers?

The Swedish government has announced its intention of placing a dozen persons who have tested positive for AIDS, but who refuse to submit to medical supervision, on an island 25 miles west of here. This announcement has called forth a storm of protest, with critics claiming that the government is trying to revive the practice of exiling lepers. Medical authorities point out that Adelsö Island is the site of a royal hunting lodge and anything but a prison. Dr. Anna Lisa Janko, who is in charge of the \$2-million-a-year project, adds that the house where the inmates would live and the park around it would function more as a care center, "although we would be obliged to restrain the freedom of the patients."



"Boy, are the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune going to knock the hell out of you!"

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